

PugetSoundPartnership

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Puget Sound Partnership Update

May 2010

Stormwater and Low Impact Development

The Stormwater Work Group is charged with developing the stormwater monitoring element of an overall ecosystem monitoring structure. They are on schedule to meet the June 30 deadline to deliver a draft strategy and implementation plan to Ecology and Partnership management.

The Partnership is collaborating with WSU Extension to teach the appropriate application of low impact development (LID) in our region, and provide the best guidance possible. Providing low cost, high quality training and guidance (including “credits” for using LID) are some of the best incentives the state can provide.

The “LID Standards Process,” led by Ecology and supported by federal funds, is working to develop recommendations on how to add LID to the next round of NPDES stormwater permits for local governments. The group will complete its work this summer. Ecology plans to issue draft phase I and II NPDES permits next spring, and issue the final permits in Spring 2012. The Partnership will be developing a “how to” guidebook with model ordinances to help local government staff add LID to their codes.

Floodplains

Partnership staff is engaging on two federal rule-making processes that will influence the management of floodplains in Puget Sound, and the region’s prospects for and approach to recovering Puget Sound.

The first of these is the proposal by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to revise the standards of the National Flood Insurance Program in response to the Biological Opinion that found the program caused jeopardy for ESA-listed species: orcas, Chinook salmon and steelhead.

The second is the proposal by the US Army Corps of Engineers to re-establish the restrictive national standard governing the growth of trees and other vegetation on levees within the PL 84-99 program, which provides significant funding for levee management in Puget Sound. Partnership staff coordinated a joint regional comment letter on the Corps proposal, getting more than 20 partners on the letter in a tight timeframe, and supported other comment letters from numerous additional parties. Partnership staff also participated in a state agency comment letter on the FEMA proposal.

As of this writing, neither FEMA nor the Corps has formally advanced their decision processes on these rules beyond assessing the comments they have received.

Partnership staff is working closely with interested and affected parties to gain a better understanding of the implications of the proposals for the recovery of Puget Sound, and to strategize and implement actions that will improve their alignment with efforts to achieve this outcome.

Invasive species

Action Agenda NTA A.5.1 calls for “Advocate for national or West Coast regional ballast water discharge standards.” In an effort to align agency regulatory standards, EPA and the US Coast Guard announced in May that they asked the National Research Council to conduct a study to help develop numeric ballast water discharge standards. The standards will take into account differing environmental and ecological conditions across the nation. They expect NRC to complete the study by mid- to late-2011. Both EPA and the Coast Guard manage ballast water through differing regulatory mandates. This study effectively delays the US Coast Guard’s work to publish their proposed final national discharge standards in the national registry; and may require an additional round of public comment on any standards recommended through the study.

The Partnership is in the process of amending an existing contract to provide \$20,000 to support work WDFW did to contain, control and eradicate New Zealand mud snails in Capitol Lake.

A fact-finding meeting was hosted by the Washington Noxious Weed Control Board to discuss a request by shellfish growers and the WSU Extension to classify nonnative Japanese eelgrass as a Class C Weed. This classification will allow growers to manage/control the eelgrass on their clam beds. It has become a major deterrent to economically viable shellfish farming, especially clams, in Willapa Bay, where commercial clam farming is a developing industry. Japanese eelgrass appeared in Washington State by 1957, where it was introduced from Japan with Pacific oysters. The state weed board will decide whether to classify Japanese eelgrass as a Class C weed in the fall.

National Estuary Program Review

Puget Sound is part of the National Estuary Program administered by U.S. EPA. Our program is being reviewed this year on the EPA’s three-year review cycle. Partnership staff is organizing a required three-day site visit for June. The review will be completed in the fall. Partnership staff participated in a similar review of the San Francisco Estuary Partnership.

Action Agenda Update and Target Setting

Partnership staff is beginning to scope the process and timeline for updating the Action Agenda strategies and actions. This work will need to reflect the forthcoming Puget Sound Science Update, current ecosystem status and trends, and

implementation results to date among other inputs. Partnership staff is continuing to scope the process for setting some recovery targets in 2010. This work was discussed with the Cross-Partnership work group on performance, threats and strategies at their meeting on June 1.

The Partnership was awarded a small grant from the National Estuary Program Climate Ready Estuaries Program to adapt the Action Agenda to account for climate change. This work will be conducted as part of the process to update the Action Agenda strategies and actions in 2011.

Engagement and Stewardship

Stewardship staff established a contract with the Seattle Aquarium to produce and distribute field guides to Puget Sound's intertidal life.

Stewardship staff reviewed the ECO-Net grant program and developed a revised strategy for the coming year's program. In addition to furthering the Partnership's public awareness objectives, this may serve as a trial for other upcoming grantmaking processes. Staff will be working in coming months to develop a grant policy manual, refined grantmaking procedures, and clearer criteria for PSP grants.

May Board Meetings

The Ecosystem Coordination Board (ECB) met on May 6. The meeting included the status of member terms and the environmental representative – both of which are slated for decisions at the June Leadership Council meeting.

The Shoreline subcommittee presented its proposal. Following a thorough discussion, the ECB reached consensus on moving forward with subcommittee's recommendations. The subcommittee will bring clarification on the stretch goals to the July meeting.

Partnership staff updated the group on the process for the 2011 legislative session. Staff also provided an update on the state budget process and cost estimation report – which will be provided in draft to ECB members in time for them to review with their various caucuses prior to the July 15 ECB meeting.

Richard Parkin, EPA, facilitated comments from members for the FFY2010 EPA allocation process. A primary concern voiced was the time it's taking to get funding allocated. The next meeting of the ECB is July 15.

The Salmon Recovery Council met May 27. The group continued discussion of Shoreline Master Plan (SMP) updates with a focus on communications; affirmed the process used to identify accelerated Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration (PSAR) projects in the Nooksack Watershed; were briefed on progress in scientific work on steelhead; and discussed a proposal from the subcommittee on identifying projects of regional significance.

Board meetings in June include the Science Panel June 8 and the Leadership Council June 17. The ECB Executive Committee will also meet on June 18 to develop the July ECB agenda.

Cross-Partnership Work Groups

No work groups met in May.

Action Area Highlights

Whidbey Basin Action Area

The Partnership is currently in final negotiations for securing the NOAA Community Based Restoration Partnership grant to provide funding for projects at the mouths of major rivers, with a particular focus on the Whidbey Basin.

The Clean Samish Initiative met on May 21st to review progress to date and to affirm Skagit County's leadership role in the work.

On May 13, the Skagit Watershed Council hosted a well-attended and very successful workshop to address "Successful Habitat Restoration in Developed Landscapes: overcoming constraints and maximizing opportunities". The Puget Sound Partnership supported this workshop.

Snohomish County's shellfish protection program for the Stillaguamish River Clean Water District is currently being ramped up and the county is working to direct additional resources and staffing to this program.

The Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) approved, and the Recovery Council affirmed, the process to fund two projects, Canyon Creek and Sygitowicz, through the expedited Puget Sound Acquisition and Recovery (PSAR) funding round.

Nooksack watershed completed their annual three-year work plan and has identified projects for funding through the 2010 SRFB round.

North-Central Action Area

Partnership staff continues to work closely with elected officials and community leaders to advance ecosystem and salmon recovery. Approaches to developing and implementing a Local Integrating Organization (LIO) are being discussed with the goal of convening a representative group that will inform the direction of this initiative. The LIO seeks to broadly represent the North-Central Action Area and accelerate the pace of implementing Action Agenda priorities in the Action Area.

The Lead Entity, West Sound Watersheds Council (WSWC), recently submitted their Three-Year Work plan to the Partnership and the Regional Implementation Technical Team (RITT), and is now focusing on project development for the upcoming SRFB and PSAR funding rounds. The Lead Entity is also considering

potential projects that may get funded in the next legislative session under PSAR funds, as well as a process to formalize their operating procedures.

Hood Canal Action Area

The Hood Canal Coordinating Council is advancing their Integrated Watershed Planning effort through various modules addressing numerous topics. Partnership staff works closely with the Council and their staff on these workgroups and is helping connect this effort to work at the PSP. The integrated plan will consist of an inventory of other plans that exist, a watershed assessment, a management plan, and a public involvement strategy, with a goal to complete a coordinated and comprehensive strategy to protect and restore the Canal.

Staff is also working closely with the Council to develop their Local Implementing Organization proposal for the Leadership Council. A working draft exists and members of the Council are offering feedback and input on its development and the role of the HCCC as an LIO.

The Lead Entity recently submitted their Three-Year Work plan and is currently identifying new projects to move forward in this year's SRFB round, as well as a representative list for next year's PSAR.

In addition, Partnership staff convened a work session of local health officials, state agencies, tribes and other interested parties on the topic of Wastewater, including On Site Sewage systems, in conjunction with the Hood Canal Coordinating Council. Recommendations will be presented to the elected officials on the HCCC, and some ideas will be presented through the Partnership with other agencies to consider in the upcoming biennial budget process.

South Sound Action Area

The South Puget Sound workgroup met on May 24 to continue its discussion of the structure, operating guidelines, membership, public outreach plan, and other details of the Local Integrating Organization proposal. The workgroup finished most of its work and the draft proposal will be presented to the South Puget Sound tribal and county elected officials for review on July 29.

The South Sound Salmon Recovery Group held a conference call on May 11 to complete its 2010 Three-year Work plan for implementing the South Sound Salmon Recovery Chapter. The Group submitted its Work plan on May 15 for review by NOAA's Regional Implementation Technical Team and the Policy Review Committee in June. The Nisqually Watershed submitted its 2010 Three-year Work plan on May 18, also for technical and policy review in June.

Partnership staff also participated in planning the third annual South Sound Science Symposium, scheduled to take place October 27 at the Squaxin Island Little Creek Casino conference center. Joe Gaydos, Sea Doc Society and Science Panel member, was confirmed as the opening remarks speaker for the conference.

The South Sound native oyster/ocean acidification project began in earnest in May. Simone Alin of NOAA A led a training session for technicians from Pacific Shellfish Institute and Puget Sound Restoration Fund to assure proper protocols are followed. The Totten Inlet field site was set up and sampling for water quality, oyster larvae, and dissolved carbon dioxide began.

San Juan Action Area

At its May 11 meeting, the San Juan County Council reviewed and adopted Resolution 23-2010, for establishing a Local Integrating Organization (LIO) in San Juan County to implement the San Juan Action Agenda profile. The LIO proposal will be presented to the Leadership Council for approval on June 17. Partnership staff also met with Common Sense Alliance, and other local entities, to hear comments on the LIO proposal.

On a May 24 conference call, the San Juan County/WRIA 2 Salmon Recovery Lead Entity began the process of developing an Adaptive Management and Monitoring plan (AMM) with the Regional Implementation Technical Team (RITT) and Partnership staff. RITT members will provide the San Juan group with an AMM template by mid-June. The San Juan AMM workgroup will meet in late June to begin developing a draft viability assessment using the template.

South Central Action Area

The South Central Action Area Caucus Group continues to advance prioritizing and sequencing actions for local implementation of the Action Agenda. The Caucus Group completed its assessment of actions that seek to protect ecosystem functions, and selected the following actions as needing to happen first:

- Establish performance incentives to achieve regional growth strategy objectives in Vision 2040. Study how comprehensive plans and local government development regulations can advance implementation of the Action Agenda, and support local governments in achieving these local implementation actions. Reach out to include input from other community-driven growth discussions such as The Cascade Agenda and The Quality Growth Alliance.
- Protect high-value habitat and land at immediate risk of conversion as identified through existing processes such as the salmon recovery plans and other ecosystem restoration/protection plans; convene a task force to develop a funding mechanism to rapidly acquire land with high ecological, open space, and working land value and at imminent risk of conversion.
- Implement recommendations from approved salmon recovery watershed plans prepared under the Salmon Recovery Act, Endangered Species Act, and the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Plan consistent with the Action Agenda and coordinated with other local restoration and protection efforts.
- Change SMA statutes and regulations to severely limit shoreline armoring and overwater coverage associated with residential development. For new armoring or repair of existing armoring, provide incentives and guidance for

using bioengineered or more natural approaches that protect shoreline habitat functions.

Caucus Group work teams will be formed to determine next steps for most appropriately and effectively advancing these actions. Meanwhile the group continues to advance assessment of restoration actions.

At its May meeting, the Caucus Group also affirmed King County Deputy Executive Fred Jarrett as Caucus Group Chair, serving as proxy for King County Executive Dow Constantine, who is the South Central Action Area representative to the Ecosystem Coordination Board. The Caucus Group will present its proposal to serve as the local integrating organization to the Leadership Council at its June 17 meeting.

Salmon recovery efforts in the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish, Green/Duwamish, and Puyallup/White watersheds are currently focused on developing and selecting projects for funding through the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration funds. These watersheds, along with others around Puget Sound, continue to assist with integrating salmon recovery needs and information resources to support shoreline protection into local governments' Shoreline Master Program update processes.

Strait of Juan de Fuca Action Area Progress Report

The Strait Ecosystem Recovery Network (Strait ERN) will finalize the Local Integrating Organization (LIO) Proposal at the June 4 Strait ERN meeting. An ECB representative, alternate, and Partnership staff for Strait AA will present the proposal to the Leadership Council at the June 17 meeting.

Three of the four collaboratively developed 2009 EPA Watershed Management Assistance Grants proposals have been funded by EPA along Strait AA, all of which will also benefit Hood Canal AA. Proponents are currently working with EPA to develop contracts.

Shoreline Master Program Updates continue in Clallam County, Jefferson County, Port Angeles, and Sequim. Work on Inventory and Characterization and Public Participation Plans continues in Clallam County, Port Angeles, and Sequim. The Jefferson County SMP Update is currently under review by DOE. Reports on the status of each is scheduled for the June 4 Strait ERN meeting.

Salmon Recovery and Action Agenda Implementation progress include Partnership staff working with the RITT to evaluate North Olympic Peninsula watersheds in the 2010 3-Year Work Plan update. Projects missing from the 3-Year Work Plan will be considered this fall for addition to 2011 3-Year Work Plan.

Partnership staff is working with Olympic National Park, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and other collaborators to finalize and prioritize a list of unfunded projects

that will support ecosystem recovery and improve understanding of the benefits and effects of dam removal at a large scale.